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SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA URGES CLOSE CONSULTATION ON HUMAN
RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: STATE 55461

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reas
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¶1. Summary: (C) IO DAS-Equivalent Beatrice Le Fraper du Hellen on April 7 regretted that the Human Rights Council (HRC) would be a less credible institution without USG participation. However, she admitted that she herself had urged the MFA not to seek an HRC seat in 2006, but to wait until 2007 when members would be elected for full three-year terms. With the U.S. absent, Le Fraper urged regular French-U.S. dialogue so that USG equities could be taken into account. She warned that the EU may put forward a Guantanamo-related resolution, but suggested that the EU had learned lessons from the fracas over renditions at the Council of Europe. Le Fraper lauded the U.S. aim to encourage the HRC to address the worst human rights abusing nations, including Iran. She suggested that France had lost patience with Zimbabwe in the domain of human rights, although the French UN delegation in New York chafed at any confrontation with the Africa Group. Lastly, Le Fraper mentioned that France and Argentina would roll out a draft convention on enforced disappearances at the HRC. End Summary.

¶2. (C) IO DAS-Equivalent Beatrice Le Fraper du Hellen on April 7 regretted that the Human Rights Council would be a less credible institution without USG participation (ref). She tempered her disappointment however with the observation that she had likewise argued -- but without success -- that France not seek an HRC seat in 2006. From a tactical standpoint, it was smarter to hold off until 2007 in order to obtain a guaranteed a full 3-year term on the Council. Candidates this year, she explained to Poloff, were competing for 1-year, 2-year or 3-year terms on the newly launched HRC; in future, terms would run for three years. Le Fraper bemoaned that France now had to launch a worldwide diplomatic campaign for a seat without knowing in advance the length of the term it would be allotted on the Council, which would be determined later by lottery. Le Fraper asked for USG support for the French candidacy. Le Fraper believed that the USG would have at least as much influence as actual seated HRC members on debates about establishing standard HRC procedures during the inaugural year, because that policy would be articulated through regional groups.

¶3. (C) With the U.S. absent from the HRC, Le Fraper urged regular French-U.S. dialogue so that USG equities could be taken into account. She noted the French and American Geneva-based delegations enjoyed good relations. Regular consultations were crucial, especially given the possibility

that some EU member would lobby to advance a resolution on Guantanamo detainees. However, Le Fraper believed the fracas over renditions at the Council of Europe had been salutary, if only for cautioning EU members that they should tread lightly, since European governments lacked full awareness of what transpired on their own territory, whether with or without direct government complicity.

¶4. (C) Le Fraper lauded the USG aim to actively encourage the HRC to address serious cases of human rights abuse in countries such as Iran, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Burma, Sudan and South Korea. FM Douste-Blazy was now particularly exercised about Iran, she said. Moreover, France had lost patience with Zimbabwe, Le Fraper insisted, pointing to French support for a human rights-related UNGA resolution, a policy decision, she added, that had vexed the French delegation in New York, which had preferred not to roil the waters with the Africa Group.

¶5. (C) Le Fraper forewarned that France and Argentina would be introducing a new draft legal convention about enforced disappearances at the HRC. She regretted that the USG would not be present at the Council for discussions, but Argentina in particular was keen on rolling out the draft this year, which marks the 30th anniversary of the launching of the so-called "Dirty War." The draft would also be presented at the General Assembly. French involvement in the initiative dated to 1978, after the disappearance of French citizens in Argentina. Le Fraper commented she knew of U.S. sensitivities about possible ramifications in the context of the detention of non-state actors. The Government of Colombia, Fraper added, had also had expressed concerns, yet now appeared ready to support the draft. (Note: Human Rights

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Desk Officer Donatienne Hissard clarified on April 10 that the U.S. had joined consensus on negotiations of the convention while nonetheless expressing reserves about the "Right to Truth," e.g. the rights of victims to information about the circumstances of their detention, as well as other rights for detainees.)

Comment

¶6. (C) Comment and BioNote: Le Fraper clearly sees the USG as an indispensable player in the advocacy of human rights. While worrying the HRC would lack weight without USG membership, Le Fraper otherwise discounted the impact of USG non-participation, apart from advising there would be a need to consult closely in order to take USG equities into account. Le Fraper said the MFA made an effort to avoid dramatization of the U.S. decision in exchanges with the press and with NGOs. BioNote: Le Fraper mentioned that her sister, Dorothe Le Fraper du Hellen, was also a dedicated human rights advocate, and a lawyer on the defense teams of both Jose Bove and Zacarias Moussaoui. Le Fraper mentioned she had just accompanied her sister to the U.S. consulate to apply for an expedited visa so that she could make an emergency trip to the trial. Le Fraper mentioned that MFA, especially MFA spokesman Mattei, has been taking great pains to work hand in glove with the USG with regard to the Moussaoui trial.

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